Bringing Library and Information Services to the Visually Impaired Persons:
The Experience of the South African Library for the Blind (SALB)

Authors: Neli Kaunda, Library and Information Services
Pumla Mahanjana, Production and Standards
SALB BACKGROUND

- Produces its own reading material in **Audio and Braille**. This bridges the gap of limited reading material available in market.
- Serves the reading and information needs of visually and print-impaired persons throughout South Africa and increasingly, Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Membership is diverse and extensive. 5500 active members.
- Average of 12000 books circulated per month through:
  - Postal delivery
  - Overdrive via the website
  - Local collections
- Audio reading material can be downloaded into different accessible mediums convenient for members
Overview

SALB supports public libraries in their role to fulfil their important contemporary function of offering a public space where activities of various types are offered and taken up in pursuit of:

- Promotion of reading and writing, with a focus on family literacy programmes
- Education and learning, formal and informal
- Participatory democracy and active citizenship
- Fostering creativity and cultural expression
- Social cohesion and the fostering of appreciation of cultural diversity; and
- Information literacy to allow citizens to participate in the knowledge society.
**MINI- LIBRARIES BACKGROUND:**

- Joint initiative between the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) (Library and Information Services) and SALB.
- The Eastern Cape pioneered the project in 2010 and has now been rolled out to other provinces.
- Primary objective is to provide access to reading materials through assistive devices and provides necessary technology.
- Bring the service to the people in the most tangible manner. This has been a unique opportunity for public libraries.
- Project opened opportunities for all illiterate people to benefit from the free service rendered.
- Positive feedback received from benefitting communities.
MINI-LIBRARIES BACKGROUND

OBJECTIVES:

- To make identified public libraries accessible through the provisioning of the necessary assistive technologies, reading material and other facilities
- To train and empower the relevant public library staff on how to render the service to the blind and visually impaired people
- To introduce users and librarians to information literacy skills
TYPES OF MINI LIBRARIES

- The total number of Mini-libs to date is 143

- COMPREHENSIVE MINI- LIBRARIES:- 42
  Provides:
  - Assistive devices like computer hardware and computer based software specifically designed for print-impaired users
  - Additional assistive devices such as document readers and victor readers for audio books
  - Tactile, audio and braille books

- AGENT MINI- LIBRARIES :- 101
  Provides:
  - Does not need dedicated space and advanced assistive devices
  - Serves as an intermediary between SALB and the member.
  - All members enrol directly with their public libraries
TYPES OF MINI LIBRARIES:

Comprehensive Mini library picture
TYPES OF MINI LIBRARIES

Growth Pattern

- Agent Type: 101
- Eastern Cape: 26
- KwaZulu-Natal: 14
- Mpumalanga: 7
ADVANTAGES TO USERS

ADVANTAGES OF JOINING:

- Social interaction with other library members
- Access to information and technology
- Training on provided technologies
- Participation in library programmes i.e. book discussions, book clubs, etc.
PROCEDURE

- Memorandum of Agreement / Service Level Agreement
- Enrolment

- Feasibility assessment
- Library space and other requirements

- Implementation in four phases

- **Phase one:** Procurement and installations

- **Phase two:** Training of library workers and beneficiaries

- **Phase three:** Sustainability

- **Phase four:** Branding and launching
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

To efficiently implement the service specialised skills:

- Empathy & patience * dedication * confidence * strong relationship building * understanding of working with limited resources.

- Librarians might find the maintenance and provision of such a service demanding and stressful.

- Literacy levels vary greatly
The training modules include:

- Practical guidelines on how to assist the visually impaired

- Theory on reading formats: braille books, daisy audio books, tactile books, record keeping and maintenance of statistics

- Technology: Daisy Player, Document reader, Jaws, Zoom text and Talking Typing Teacher

- Training courses creates awareness to the whole community about library activities and integration of library members with the sighted peers.
TRAINING:

Training Session: Pictures
PROJECT IMPACT:

FROM THE LIBRARY USERS APPROACH:

- Training focuses on human resources development and personal encounters
- Counts & measures of statistics demonstrate how much the library is used
SUCCESSES & IMPACT

- Meeting the mandate of public libraries: SERVING ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY
- Enriching lives and making significant impact in a tangible manner
- Increased interest in reading
- Strengthened campaign to establish mini-libs
- Establish strong public-private partnerships
- Long term investment towards economic development
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Programmes are evaluated to ascertain that they are:
  - Achieving the objectives and declared goals of the mini library
  - Meeting the needs of the community
  - Able to meet the changing needs
  - Ensure that they are adequately resourced
  - Cost effective
  - In need of improvement, new direction or redefinition
Performance indicators are primarily derived from five types of measures:-

- Input measures
- Process measures
- Output measures
- Outcomes
- Impacts
CHALLENGES

- There is limited access to information
- Transport problems to visit the library
- Lack of internet services more specifically in rural poor areas
- More computer training required
- Limited titles in indigenous languages
- Limited digital rights access and copyright laws which hampers the conversion of resources into formats suitable for the print-impaired
CONCLUSION

- Meeting the SALB Mandate

- Support the vision of the National Government to improve the quality of life of all South African citizens.

- Learning Opportunities

- Partnerships
Thank you!

nesikaunda@salb.org.za

www.salb.org.za

+27 46 6227226